**Irony**

**Read and think:**

Major Differences by Sara Holbrook

Whenever

your kind sticks together,

my kind feels left out.

When your kind starts to whisper,

my kind starts to shout.

Your kind feels neglected,

my kinds feels aggrieved.

We both feel disrespected,

both feel we’ve been deceived.

We divide the world in columns

when we stick to our own kind.

We nurture our suspicions,

keep our stereotypes in line.

We have to keep our distance

so we’ve another kind to blame.

How come,

if we’re so different,

we both react the same?

**Talk about it:**

1. Explain “your kind” and “my kind”.

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2. What are the differences between the two groups?

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3. Does the word “stereotypes” help you understand this poem? Why or why not?

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4. Answer the question in the last stanza.

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5.Do you feel the same as the speaker? Why or why not?

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http://michaelmwhite.com/pdf/holbrookhandout2.pdf

**Irony**

Read the last 2 stanza carefully. Several of the lines say one thing but mean quite the opposite. This is **verbal irony**. What do the lines say, and what do they really mean?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Lines | Quote | What the lines mean |
| 10-11 |  |  |
| 12-13 |  |  |
| 14-15 |  |  |
| 16-18 |  |  |

How would the impact of the poem change if we rewrote the last stanza like this?

*We shouldn’t keep our distance*

*Nor stick to our own kind.*

*Because*

*It’s not so helpful*

*And builds a narrow mind.*

**Now you try it:**

Write a stanza of poetry about the importance of green vegetables. In your stanza, don’t come right out and give your opinion. Instead, use irony to convey your ideas. Use Holbrock’s poem as a model.

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Taken from *Discovery Voice,* Nancy Dean 2006

##### Richard Cory

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| WHENEVER Richard Cory went down town, |  |
| We people on the pavement looked at him: |  |
| He was a gentleman from sole to crown, |  |
| Clean favored, and imperially slim. |  |
|  |  |
| And he was always quietly arrayed, | *5* |
| And he was always human when he talked; |  |
| But still he fluttered pulses when he said, |  |
| “Good-morning,” and he glittered when he walked. |  |
|  |  |
| And he was rich—yes, richer than a king, |  |
| And admirably schooled in every grace: | *10* |
| In fine, we thought that he was everything |  |
| To make us wish that we were in his place. |  |
|  |  |
| So on we worked, and waited for the light, |  |
| And went without the meat, and cursed the bread; |  |
| And Richard Cory, one calm summer night, | *15* |
| Went home and put a bullet through his head. |  |

##### How many stanzas are there?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the rhyme scheme? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Underline the words that would be used when talking about royalty.
3. What do you know about the speaker? See lines 2, 11-14. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the message? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the irony in this poem? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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##### More Irony

**Read and think:**

*“Oh, there’s a thrilling shot of one of the kids being sick on a small fishing boat off the coast of Florida and we are hovering over him offering him salami and mayonnaise sandwiches. That one really [cracks] me up.”* Emma Brombeck, *At Wit’s End*

**Talk about it:**

1. Remember that verbal irony implies the opposite of what is said, and irony may or may not be sarcastic (intending to hurt). Bombeck describes a picture from a family vacation as thrilling. Is it ironic or sarcastic? Explain.

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##### Look at the following rewrite of the passage:

*We have a picture of one of the kids being sick on a small fishing boat off the coast of Florida. In the picture, we’re making fun of him and offering him salami and mayonnaise sandwiches. We know it’s wrong, but it’s kind of funny.*

Which version is funnier? Why? How does the use of irony help shape your understanding of the author’s attitude toward the vacation picture?

**Now you try it:**

Write a few sentences describing a family outing you didn’t enjoy. Include at least one example of verbal irony (sarcastic or not). Use Brombeck’s passage as a model.

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Taken from *Discovery Voice,* Nancy Dean 2006

##### Billy Collins

##### The History Teacher

Trying to protect his students' innocence  
he told them the Ice Age was really just  
the Chilly Age, a period of a million years  
when everyone had to wear sweaters.

And the Stone Age became the Gravel Age,  
named after the long driveways of the time.

The Spanish Inquisition was nothing more  
than an outbreak of questions such as  
"How far is it from here to Madrid?"  
"What do you call the matador's hat?"  
  
The War of the Roses took place in a garden,  
and the Enola Gay dropped one tiny atom on Japan.

The children would leave his classroom  
for the playground to torment the weak  
and the smart,  
mussing up their hair and breaking their glasses,

while he gathered up his notes and walked home  
past flower beds and white picket fences,  
wondering if they would believe that soldiers  
in the Boer War told long, rambling stories  
designed to make the enemy nod off.

##### What is ironic about the events detailed in this poem?

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1. Look up the word “allusion” on the front of this packet. Underline the allusions in this poem.

**The Trouble with Poetry**

The trouble with poetry, I realized   
as I walked along a beach one night --   
cold Florida sand under my bare feet,   
a show of stars in the sky --

the trouble with poetry is   
that it encourages the writing of more poetry,   
more guppies crowding the fish tank,   
more baby rabbits   
hopping out of their mothers into the dewy grass.

And how will it ever end?   
unless the day finally arrives   
when we have compared everything in the world   
to everything else in the world,

and there is nothing left to do   
but quietly close our notebooks   
and sit with our hands folded on our desks.

Poetry fills me with joy   
and I rise like a feather in the wind.   
Poetry fills me with sorrow   
and I sink like a chain flung from a bridge.

But mostly poetry fills me   
with the urge to write poetry,   
to sit in the dark and wait for a little flame   
to appear at the tip of my pencil.

And along with that, the longing to steal,   
to break into the poems of others   
with a flashlight and a ski mask.

And what an unmerry band of thieves we are,   
cut-purses, common shoplifters,   
I thought to myself   
as a cold wave swirled around my feet   
and the lighthouse moved its megaphone over the sea,   
which is an image I stole directly   
from Lawrence Ferlinghetti --   
to be perfectly honest for a moment --

the bicycling poet of San Francisco   
whose little amusement park of a book   
I carried in a side pocket of my uniform   
up and down the treacherous halls of high school.

1. Explain the irony in this poem. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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##### The Lanyard lanyard Billy Collins

##### The other day as I was ricocheting slowly off the pale blue walls of this room, bouncing from typewriter to piano, from bookshelf to an envelope lying on the floor, I found myself in the L section of the dictionary where my eyes fell upon the word “lanyard.”   No cookie nibbled by a French novelist could send one more suddenly into the past -- a past where I sat at a workbench at a camp by a deep Adirondack lake learning how to braid thin plastic strips into a lanyard, a gift for my mother.   I had never seen anyone use a lanyard or wear one, if that’s what you did with them, but that did not keep me from crossing strand over strand again and again until I had made a boxy red and white lanyard for my mother.   She gave me life and milk from her breasts, and I gave her a lanyard. She nursed me in many a sickroom, lifted teaspoons of medicine to my lips, set cold face-cloths on my forehead, and then led me out into the airy light   and taught me to walk and swim, and I, in turn, presented her with a lanyard. Here are thousands of meals, she said, and here is clothing and a good education. And here is your lanyard, I replied, which I made with a little help from a counselor.   Here is a breathing body and a beating heart, strong legs, bones and teeth, and two clear eyes to read the world, she whispered, and here, I said, is the lanyard I made at camp. And here, I wish to say to her now, is a smaller gift--not the archaic truth   that you can never repay your mother, but the rueful admission that when she took the two-tone lanyard from my hands, I was as sure as a boy could be that this useless, worthless thing I wove out of boredom would be enough to make us even.    1. What is the message of this poem?

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2.What lines could possibly considered humorous? Why?

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1. Identify one example of irony and explain how it is ironic.

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